

This Week in Congress

June 20, 2005

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." This was a busy week in Washington, D.C., as the House of Representatives continued to work through the annual appropriations process. This is the procedure that funds federal departments for the next year.

Providing Additional Support for Law Enforcement and Fighting Meth

Our law enforcement officers put their lives on the line to keep our Kansas communities safe. This week, the House passed 2006 funding for the Department of Justice, which includes additional resources for Kansas law enforcement. One program of note is the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant program. This program provides federal resources to assist state and local law enforcement to fight violent and drug-related crimes. The program has proven to be successful in helping fight methamphetamine use in Kansas.

The legislation passed this week also provides funding for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration and state and local law enforcement for crime fighting initiatives. During debate on the legislation, I voted for several amendments to increase funding for these important programs. The Senate is now considering this legislation. As Congress works to finalize the 2006 funding legislation, I will continue efforts to adequately fund these important programs.

House Defends Privacy of Libraries

Also included in Department of Justice legislation was an amendment to keep the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other agencies from accessing library records and book sale records. After passage of the PATRIOT Act in 2001, many Kansans have told me that they felt the provisions allowing the FBI to obtain an individual's library records went too far and infringed on personal rights. While the security of our nation is important, we must not violate individuals' privacy. The passage of this amendment rightly restores the privacy of library patrons and those that purchase books. I will continue working to find a balance between strengthening our national security and protecting our civil liberties.

Working to Reform the United Nations

This week, the House passed a measure calling for broad reforms to the United Nations. Many Kansans have shared with me their frustrations with this international organization and the need to address ongoing reports of U.N. inefficiency, mismanagement and abuse.

In today's global environment, the U.N. serves a purpose by resolving conflicts and providing assistance to countries around the world. However, it cannot continue to do so if it is plagued by scandal and bureaucracy. Americans provide 22 percent of the U.N.'s budget, and it is important that the U.N. be held accountable for how this money is spent.

The legislation passed this week would call for weighted voting on matters concerning the U.N. budget so that in the future, the U.S. would have more say on these issues than countries making smaller contributions. It would also make the funding of several less important programs voluntary, so that contributing nations would have more say in where their money is spent. In addition, the legislation would reduce the budget used for international conferences. These conferences actually comprise the largest part of the U.N.'s budget.

The U.N. has seen its share of fraud and abuse, but it still serves an important purpose. I hope these legislative reforms will be a wake-up call to the organization that the U.S. will not continue to sit back and let this activity continue.

Promoting Travel, Trade with Cuba

On Thursday I joined Members of Congress with the common interest of opening Cuba to trade and travel. During the meeting, Members had the opportunity to discuss strategies for expanding agriculture exports and travel opportunities to Cuba.

In 2000, I introduced the legislation that, for the first time in 42 years, allowed U.S. agriculture products to be shipped to Cuba. Unfortunately, there are those in the Administration and Congress who still feel we should continue to embargo the Cuban people. Earlier this year, I introduced new legislation that would remove additional barriers to our farmers and ranchers exporting to Cuba and to reverse actions that have gone against the intent of Congress. The bipartisan group of Members that have cosponsored my legislation believe, as I do, that American producers should have the opportunity to compete in this important market. Kansas farmers and ranchers have the opportunity to expand their exports and feed a Cuban population in need. The current Cuban embargo that has been in place over 40 years has not led to a change in government, and I believe a new approach should be taken to promote freedom in Cuba.

I agree that Fidel Castro has been a tyrannical leader and that efforts to free the Cuban people should continue. But I believe that the best way to accomplish this is by expanding trade, not just of wheat and corn, but also of our ideas and the concept of democracy. There is something the Cuban people need more than food - their freedom.

Helping Provide Assistance to Crime Victims

This week, I met with Sandy Barnett and Joyce Grover, of the Kansas Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence in Topeka. They help provide essential services and advocacy on behalf of crime victims in Kansas. We discussed legislation I supported in the House this week that would continue federal assistance for crime victims, including \$387 million for the Violence Against Women Office.

Earlier this year, I contacted the House Appropriations Committee about protecting funding for the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and the Crime Victims Fund. In the First Congressional District of Kansas, VOCA funds have helped support family crisis centers, improve county attorney offices' victim advocacy services and respond to the needs of child abuse, sexual assault and domestic violence victims. VOCA operates on money collected from criminal fines, forfeitures and assessments to pay for victims' services and compensations. I am pleased that funding will continue and the program will remain a crucial resource to many communities and organizations for victims' services and compensation.

Big First Tour Continues

My listening tour of the Big First Congressional District continued this past weekend. On Saturday, I met with Rooks County residents in Stockton. In the meeting we discussed the recent tornados that damaged the town and what assistance was available to help. I also toured the damaged areas.

For a full list of times and dates when I'll be in your county, visit here: http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/ks01_moran/041105TheTour.html

In the Office

There were many Kansans that were in the office this week. Anita Cummings from Burlington, President of the Kansas Jaycees ,was in to discuss Social Security Reform. In to discuss biodiesel and energy issues were members of the Kansas Soybean Association, including Kenlon Johannes and Dennis Hupe, both of Topeka, and Harold Kraus from Hays. Several bankers from across Kansas were in to discuss issues affecting their industry. Attendees included Mark Berkley from Tescott, Kirk Bradford from Marysville, Dale Bradley from Miltonvale, Barney Horton from Atwood, Steve Locke from Junction City, Dave Long from Cimarron, Dick Nichols from McPherson, Rob Oglevie from Ulysses, Reed Peters from Larned, Mike Stevens from Sublette and Ken Stout from Woodbine. I also visited with Daniel McAtee from Topeka, son of the late Chuck McAtee, a long-time friend.

Paul Fleener of Topeka stopped in to discuss the Society of St. Andrew's hunger advocacy group. Tim Miller from WaKeeney was in to discuss Medicare modernization while representatives from CureSearch were in to talk about childhood cancer research. That group included Judi O'Grady and Robyne Pippert from Eudora, Linda McFate and Emily Wilson from Coffeyville and Austin and Cindi Tedder from Olathe.

I also met with over a hundred Kansas students in blue corduroy jackets, who were in Washington, D.C. representing the Kansas FFA. I also had the pleasure of meeting James Fickbohm of Barnes and Ashley Moser of Topeka, who were attending the Congressional Youth Leadership Council conference.

In my office for a tour of the Capitol building this week were Mark and Judy Desetti of Lawrence and their children Nathan and Caitleen, as well as Tim Hageman and children Andy, Cody, and Aubrey, and Merry Lovewell all of Hays. Students and teachers from the Hutchinson area were in the office and in Washington, D.C. for the National History Day. Those attending were Mark and Virginia Laforce and their children Jordan and Natasha, Daniel Asbell, Kayla Russell, and Dawn and Sarah Slifer all of Nickerson; Heather Sazama and her son Tate, Loren, Randi, Pam and Robin Morris, Mike and Julie Wilson and son Evan all of Hutchinson, and Tristan Hinderliter of Manhattan.

Also in the office for a tour were Christopher and Heather Miller of Junction City, Dave and Mary Beth Long of Cimarron, Randy and Terry Kilian of Hays, Vicky Kessler of Moundridge, Cyndi Koehn of Hesston, Dana and Tina Brewer of Concordia with their daughter Marie, and Allen and Denise Phillips of Tribune with their children Wesley and Kayla.

Very truly yours,

Jerry